

"The Canterbury Tales" by Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the most important and celebrated works of Middle English literature. Written in the late 14th century, it is a collection of stories told by a group of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. The tales explore a wide variety of themes and genres, showcasing Chaucer's wit, humor, and keen observation of medieval society.

Overview: The structure of "The Canterbury Tales" begins with a **General Prologue**, where Chaucer introduces a diverse group of pilgrims from different walks of life. It provides a vivid snapshot of medieval life, values, and humor while addressing universal human concerns that resonate across the centuries.

Fate and Fortune: The unpredictability of fate is a recurring theme, especially in tales like "The Knight's Tale" and "The Monk's Tale," where characters reflect on the rise and fall of great figures.

Style: Chaucer's use of **vernacular Middle English** was groundbreaking at the time, as much literature was written in Latin or French. His rich characterization and variety of narrative voices showcase his skill as a writer, blending humor, irony, and morality.

Legacy: Though "The Canterbury Tales" was never completed (Chaucer likely intended to write 120 tales but completed only 24), it remains one of the most influential works in English literature. "The Canterbury Tales" is also notable for its diverse genres, incorporating everything from romance to satire, allegory to comedy. The innkeeper suggests a storytelling contest, where each pilgrim will tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back, with the best tale winning a free meal. These pilgrims come together at an inn in London and decide to entertain themselves by telling stories during their pilgrimage to Canterbury.